

## Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, November 25, 1880, with transcript

Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. L Bailey's Hotel, Glo'ster Road, Queen's Gate, S. W., London, Nov. 25th, 1880. My darling little wifie:

You don't know what a narrow escape you have had from losing the affections of your devoted A.G.B.! What would you say to find me eloping with a lovely charming sweet young lady whose name I don't even know? Were I not a married man nobody can tell what the consequences might be! A romance certainly! Let me tell you of my adventure. On reaching Amiens I left the carriage in search of the refreshment room when my attention was arrested by a sweet musical voice asking "Is this Calais"? in the English tongue.

I turned and saw a lovely girl in the next compartment to my own addressing a French Porter in the English Language!

She was accompanied by a foreign maid who seemed to be as unfamiliar with French as she was. The porter nodded his head — and my fairy vision immediately flew into a white cloud — and hurried up her maid to leave the train. A tender pity filled my heart. They were strangers in a foreign land — and I? — I was her countryman — and with my superior knowledge of French was it not my duty to render assistance? They were in the compartment for "dames seules" and were evidently d ames seules without a masculine protector! The instinct of politeness so firmly ingrafted into my nature by your fair hands — (so you are responsible for all that follows) — impelled me to go to the door 2 and — look as if I desired to speak. "I spoke — yet I said nothing — what of that my eye discoursed — she answered it" (Shakespeare). After a moment's hesitation she plied me with the question she had asked the porter and I told her Calais was three hours' distant and the last station on the line. Her maid cross-questioned me in a foreign tongue which I

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did not understand and then resorted to sign-language. Repeating the word “Londres” a number of times with a questioning look — she moved her hands to ask whether they should leave the train — to which I replied with a shake of my head an emphatic “reste ici” and a gesture to tell her to keep her seat. What a nice commencement that would have been for a bachelor! A lovely English girl with a Spanish maid — in France — without any knowledge of French

Arrived at Calais could I do less than offer my assistance to my distressed countrywoman I could show her the way to the boat — assist her with her baggage — and act as her interpreter! Need it be said that my assistance was tendered and gratefully accepted. I called a porter and sported my french before my astonished and relieved companions. Together we wended our way to the “batteau” — and a delightful little conversation with my fair charmer ensued — the details of which it will be unnecessary to relate! Suffice it to say that she had travelled from Spain and was then en route for the Victoria Station in London.

What more natural than that that should be my own destination also? Had I been a bachelor Charing Gross would never have seen me and “Victoria would have led me to victori (victory or) a failure!

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However thoughts of my little wife were in my mind. I saw her safely to the proper train — lifted my hat — and then “Adieu fair maid — alas for ever.”

My romance was ended. I was speedily coiled up under my rug in the Charing Cross train — and dreamed of — you — till the journey was ended.

The dinner at Mr. Spottiswood's was a pleasant little affair. A small gathering of eminent men. Dr. Siemens, Sir John Lubbock, Mr. Smalley, and Mr. Warren de la Rue. The ladies present were Mrs. Smalley, Mrs. De la Rue and one other lady whose name I forget.

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I only wish I could have been in Paris to-day to wish you viva voce "Many Happy Returns" which I telegraphed you to-day but as it cannot be I must console myself in solitude. I went directly from the train to the Langham and gave instructions to be called at half-past eight. I rose at that time and opened my door for the hot water — but laziness prevailed — and a bad headache — to force me to bed again. I woke at half-past one — fresh and bright and found by my bedside a bundle of letters and a telegram from your father telling me to go to Mr. Bigelow's at eleven o'clock to see the nurse whose photograph I showed you. The poor woman had to wait till nearly three o'clock before I made my appearance!

Your father and I are both much pleased with her. She is just what I want for Elsie but is not exactly what you want for baby. She is a good seamstress and I should like very much to take her as your seamstress and a sort of nursery governess for Elsie — and employ a regular nurse girl to do the drudgery when we reach America. I am so much pleased with her that I would like to send her to Paris to see you. I hope you have written to Mrs. Bigelow thanking her for all the trouble she has taken.

Your father took possession of me yesterday afternoon and carried me off to a tailor's in the city. The coat was tried on to-day and I am to have the suit complete by Saturday evening.

I have been hard at work to-day preparing for the Royal Society's meeting.

I gave my paper but was greatly disappointed in myself. I am out of practice in regard to public speaking and had to face a critical audience. My communication was well received but I feel so dissatisfied with myself that I am quite nervous at the thought of the lectures I have promised to give next week. To add to my discomfort it is evident that my appearance will be anything but pleasant as a stie is rapidly forming on one of my eyelids.

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The enclosed cablegram came for you to-day. Chester — as I told you in my in telegram — has decided to try the fortunes of Washington and is now making preparations for his departure on the ninth.

I have not seen Mr. Hubbard to-day. Poor Berta and Charlie — they have been in my mind all to-day. However a good 5 time is coming — and a marriage may be happy even if the wedding does not come on the 25th of November.

I hope Charlie is not too impatient to be out of bed. Mind you let me know how he is.

Your short note with the calling cards was received to-day. A large number of cards disappeared to-day at the Royal Society. I have accepted invitations to visit Mr. Huggins — the distinguished Spectroscopist and Sir John Lubbock.

With much love.

Your own, Alec. How is your Mamma. Cablegram from Brantford to “Mrs. Graham Bell — Baring Bros. London. Many happy returns Tutelo.”